Visual Branding for
“The Middle of Everywhere” Senior Graphic Design Show

A Senior Project
presented to
the Faculty of the Art and Design Department
California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Art and Design; Bachelor of Fine Arts

by

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December, 2009
Abstract

In this project, a series of promotional items is designed for an end of year senior graphic design show called “The Middle of Everywhere.” This series includes a set of four posters, a mailer, and a postcard.

In order to accomplish this, research was conducted to begin planning the event, set a date and location, and to gauge the interest of the senior class. The solution chosen to implement the posters was to create a whimsical illustration of a busy town celebrating the work and talent of the graduating seniors; this personal approach attempted to include each individual in the class. This drawing was then separated and applied to the different print applications of the posters, postcards, and mailer.
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Chapter I: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

At the end of each year, Art and Design seniors concentrating in photography and studio art display the results of their work in individual shows at various venues throughout the Cal Poly campus and San Luis Obispo community. However, while graphic design concentrations comprise the majority of the department, they have not yet had an opportunity to publicly show and celebrate their work. An end of year show will be set up to give graphic design seniors an opportunity to display their work to friends, family, potential employers, and the Cal Poly community.

“The Middle of Everywhere” will be a senior class show that aims to showcase the diverse talents and ideas of graduating graphic design students from Cal Poly’s Art and Design Department. This theme attempts to take a positive spin on the sentiment that Cal Poly is “in the middle of nowhere.” In fact, San Luis Obispo is conveniently located between two major art hubs, San Francisco and Los Angeles, where many of Cal Poly’s students are from. This end of year exhibition intends to showcase the rich body of talent that is the result of this diversity. This will be the first year that a show of this kind will be planned and executed.

The project is to develop a brand and series of promotional materials for “The Middle of Everywhere,” which will tentatively take place during Spring Quarter 2010. The primary scope of the project will include a poster, mailer, and postcard/flyer. The target audience for this project will be Cal Poly students, community members, employers, friends and faculty; the series should communicate the theme of the event as well as logistical details.

Objective of the Study

The study intends to create a consistent and unified branding system across each
application that successfully demonstrates the theme and logistical details of the event.

Limitations of the Study

Since the promotional items will eventually be produced under a very small budget, items must be designed so that they are practical and may be printed fairly inexpensively. However, within the time span for this given project, promotional items will be produced and submitted using non-commercial printing methods. Also, the logistical information to be presented on the poster is dependent upon when it is acquired, as the actual event is being planned concurrently.

There are also some limitations with considerations to the personal, illustrative approach chosen to execute the project. Since the ultimate goal of the project will include each graphic design student participating in the show, the entire illustration will not be complete until everyone has registered and a final count for the show has been made. Until then, generic characters and blank storefronts will be drawn to leave room for everybody.

Glossary of Terms

This report will refer to terms that are specific to the graphic and printing industries. Following is a compilation of terms used.

Adobe Photoshop: (or simply Photoshop) the industry standard in image manipulation software developed and published by Adobe Systems; produces raster (or pixel based) files.

Adobe Illustrator: (or simply Illustrator) a vector graphics editor developed and published by Adobe Systems; also used to create single-page printed documents.

Adobe InDesign: (or simply InDesign) a desktop publishing software developed and published by Adobe Systems; used to create books, brochures, magazines.

Bleed: Printing that extends to the very edge of a page after it is trimmed.
Blend Modes: allow a user to adjust how one layer or color mixes with the colors in the layers below; can also be used with painting tools to adjust how brushes affect existing colors.

CMYK: The abbreviation used for cyan, magenta, yellow, and key (black); these are the four process colors used in printing.

DPI: dots per inch; defines how many dots of ink are placed on a page when an image is printed. Generally, a file should be created at a resolution of at least 300 DPI for printing purposes.

JPEG: Joint Photographic Experts Group format; commonly used to display photographs and other continuous tone images; supports CMYK, RGB, and Grayscale color modes.

Kerning: The amount of horizontal spacing between two given letters.

Layer: In Adobe Photoshop, layers are like sheets of stacked acetate; you can see through transparent areas of one layer to the layers below. Layers can be used to organize and add images and text; apply layer styles, filters, and other adjustments without affecting other layers.

Layout paper: a heavyweight paper with a smooth finish and degree of transparency used for preparing layouts; a good canvas for pen or marker.

Leading: The amount of vertical spacing between lines of type.

Resolution: a measurement of the output quality of an image; in this project, resolution will be defined in terms of dots per inch (DPI).

Saturation: The intensity of a given color.

Swatches: a window that stores colors that are used often; colors may be added, deleted, and saved as palettes.
Chapter II: Summary of Research

Event Branding

Since the materials produced as a result of this project will be used to publicize an event to a larger community, some research was conducted to learn more about event branding from a marketing perspective.

Event branding is crucial to an event because it helps reinforce a theme or message, in addition to visually unifying the event. It can also increase the return on an investment. “The Middle of Everywhere” will be the first show of its kind to take place for the graphic design concentration; the hope is that this event will be both memorable and worthwhile so that it may be repeated in the future, perhaps annually. Creating a memorable visual brand for the event will help build excitement leading up to the event, and generate a large turnout.

The branding helps carry the theme throughout the entire event, and should not end with just posters and invitations. All details of an event should be analyzed to incorporate the brand as thoroughly as possible. More in depth branding will take place later on in the event planning process, as more logistical details are developed. Therefore, a theme should be developed that is versatile enough to be used in many ways throughout the event.

Event Planning

As the design aspect of the project began, preliminary event planning also began taking place so that logistical information could be included in the promotional materials. Several steps were taken in order to reserve an appropriate venue and date for the show. Various locations on and off campus were scouted; a list of major Art and Design department events was gathered so that there would not be any conflicting events. Meanwhile, a survey was taken of graduating seniors to gauge the level of interest, as well
as ask for any preferences regarding either the date or location (see Figure 1). The amount of seniors interested in participating would be influential in determining the size of the venue chosen.

As for the event location, logistical and liability issues made it an obvious decision to hold the event on the Cal Poly campus. The list was narrowed down to three locations throughout campus, for various reasons:

- **University Union Room 220** – This is a large meeting room in a very central location on campus. The room already has several large meeting tables and chairs, as well as plenty of wall space and a large projector screen.

- **University Art Gallery** – The department art gallery would be an obvious decision, as it is a familiar and convenient location for art majors. The white walls and lighting are conducive to displaying artwork, and students would have access to many resources already available to them within the department.

- **Second floor of Robert E. Kennedy Library** – The library is another central location for the general student body, and would have a built in audience as the second floor has a lot of foot traffic. The organizer is very supportive of student art shows and it is already a popular location for photography shows. There is a lot of open space for tables and has good lighting.

Information was gathered in preparation to reserve whichever location was most preferred by the student body. For an on-campus club activity, the typical process involves submitting an E-Plan “Approval of Club Activity” to Cal Poly Events 14 days prior to an event with the following information:

- date and time of event
- title of event
However, since this event will not be conducted by any specific student club, it was discovered that the process would be slightly different. The event would need to be reserved by a faculty or staff member (the senior project advisor) via email to events@calpoly.edu with the following information two to four weeks prior to the event:

- name of sponsoring department/organization
- name, phone and email of requestor
- type of event
- event name
- date(s) requested
- start time
- end time
- setup/takedown time needed
- anticipated headcount
- preferred location (first and second choice)
- refreshment/av equipment details
- will off-campus visitors attend?

For the more department specific locations of the library and University Art Gallery, there were specific coordinators to contact. The person in charge of organizing exhibitions at the library was Catherine Trujillo, the Special Collections Assistant, who could be reached at ctrujill@calpoly.edu or (805) 756-6247. The gallery coordinator at this time
was Jeff Van Kleeck, who could be reached at (805) 756-1571 or jvanklee@calpoly.edu. University Art Gallery exhibitions are planned two years in advance, so it was important to be familiar with the existing schedule, which could be found on the gallery website at artgallery.calpoly.edu.

The surveys were distributed throughout the three senior project classes. The overwhelming favorites for the show were the University Art Gallery and UU 220, for mid-April. After the survey results were gathered, the department chair was approached about the date and location so that the room could be reserved as soon as possible, and the show included in the department calendar. It was difficult to come to an agreement as there were existing events scheduled throughout the spring quarter. One of the major conflicts was the annual juried student show, which would be on display in the gallery for several weeks throughout spring quarter. Many of the seniors’ pieces would be on display at this show. Jeff van Kleeck was approached about the date conflicts; he enthusiastically offered the gallery as a venue for the week before the spring BFA Studio Art Exhibition, when there was nothing scheduled to be in the gallery. Thus, “The Middle of Everywhere” was set to be in the University Art Gallery on May 14, 2010.

Of 30 surveys taken, all but two responded enthusiastically about participating in the show. This established a tentative amount of students that should be included in the promotional collateral. This would be necessary to help plan out the amount of spreads that would be involved in the final set of posters.

**Printing Costs**

Quotes were requested from Papyrus printing shop in San Jose, CA, where most of the printing will be done. Discounts would be negotiated closer to the printing date, but prior to discounts, printing quotes were calculated to be approximately:

- 2.75”x8.5” postcards, color Front B/W Back: $45 for 1000; $85 for 2500
- 5”x12” invitations, color Front and Back: $125 for 200-1000
• 11”x17” posters, color, full-bleed: $.60 each, excluding cost of paper
• Large-format full color printing for a large scale print of the entire spread: $3 per square foot

**Visual Research**

For the promotional material, I wanted to depict my classmates within a fictional town that was both exciting and personal. I wanted to communicate a sense of celebration, while remaining professional, as this show would be showcasing student work to the general public as well as potential employers.

Vintage children’s illustrations were used as references and inspiration; some specific examples are Richard Scarry’s *Busy, Busy World* series, and the book *Gypsy Girl’s Best Shoes* by Anne Rockwell (see figures 2 and 3). These books had the same sense of whimsical excitement I was looking for. They also showed characters in a generic, yet familiar and nostalgic way.

Visual research was also conducted throughout San Luis Obispo, especially on Mill Street (Figure 4), a street known for its beautifully decorated Victorian houses. A visual data bank of architectural details was compiled so that “The Middle of Everywhere” would contain bits of San Luis Obispo as well.
Chapter III: Procedures and Results

The concept for the promotional items was to create a series of three or four posters that each show one part of a bustling town, to which each of my classmates brings a unique quality or talent. These services will be translated into individual stores that are loosely related to their interests or what field of design they would like to pursue. I also planned on illustrating each individual participating in the activities of the town. Because a set list of participating seniors would not be acquired until much later in the year, the drawings would be an in progress work. They would need to look complete in time for the project submission, but also be able to accommodate for changes and additions as the year went on. I would plan for this by adding several empty building fronts into the illustrations, that could easily be converted into actual stores later on.

Drawing Process

As mentioned before, I began the drawing process by compiling a visual dictionary of the architectural details (Figure 5) I wanted to include in my drawings of “The Middle of Everywhere.” This included anything from lamps, plants, tiling, windows, doors, molding, shingles, and others. Having these sketches helped me generate buildings quickly, as well as help unify the overall look of the town. In order to personalize each part of the town, I also brainstormed with my classmates and started a list of possible shop or service ideas I could attribute to each classmate. This list would be continued throughout the year as I collected final registrations for the show itself. I decided to create four total spreads in order to accommodate all of the students that wanted to participate in the show, as well as a spread with a “Town Hall” where our professors could be added at a later point.

I started drawing each spread of the town on 14”x17” sheets of layout paper, in pencil. I then traced over each drawing with a 1mm felt tipped marker so that I would still have
the original pencil drawing to alter if necessary. These drawings were then imported into Photoshop, where the contrast was enhanced so that the white backgrounds could be removed easily. Some minor editing was done if ink had gotten smudged anywhere on the original drawing. These line drawings became the basis of my spreads (Figure 6).

The caricatures of my classmates (Figure 7) were drawn after all the buildings were finished so that the characters could interact with each other within the existing environments. These were also rendered in the same method on marker paper. I experimented with several different styles before I settled on one that would be appropriate for the solution. At first, I tried drawing more detailed caricatures that were fairly realistic; however, this did not feel consistent to the overall look of the buildings, which were more whimsical, and less realistic. I tried different illustration styles before developing one that I felt was equally whimsical and simplified, while still capable of capturing the personalities of my classmates.

**Coloring Process**

Once the black and white line drawings were scanned in and edited, a new file was created that was the size of all four spreads together, so that the coloring would stay consistent and line up seamlessly. The posters would be tabloid sized, so the file I worked in was 44”x17” with a resolution of 300 DPI. The four scanned drawings were placed into this document and joined together, then flattened into a single layer.

I wanted to stay consistent with the hand drawn quality of the illustrations, so when coloring them, I tried to simulate a watercolor effect in Photoshop. I created a new layer beneath the line drawing that would provide a watercolor paper texture to the canvas. I did this by applying a Bevel and Emboss blending mode, and choosing a cold press watercolor paper texture in the drop down menu. To color the actual buildings, I chose a watercolor brush on the Multiply blending mode so that the brush strokes would
be transparent and look like they were absorbed into the paper texture. Shapes within the building were selected using the Magic Wand tool, then filled in with the watercolor brushes in various sizes. The coloring was done on a separate layer to preserve the drawing and paper layers.

Though the character illustrations were drawn separately, they were colored in the same method, then cut out and placed into the drawing. Since they were separate from the building illustration, I had the freedom to move them without affecting the background, as well as duplicate some generic characters to help the town seem busier.

*Designing the Applications*

The illustrations would be incorporated into three main applications: the posters, a postcard, and a mailed invitation. Because each application would be viewed in different contexts, the typography would be approached differently.

The first component I created was a hand drawn banner welcoming viewers to “The Middle of Everywhere.” There would also be a subhead reading “a cal poly senior graphic design exhibition.” Since this text would be considerably smaller, yet still legible, I decided to digitally typeset the words on a curved path to fit underneath the banner. The typeface used was Adobe Caslon, a traditional serif face that, while not elegant, is still visually pleasing with a homey and friendly quality. To stay consistent with the illustrative quality, I manually traced over the subhead within Photoshop. This banner would be used in different ways throughout the three applications.

*Posters (Figures 9.1-9.4)*

The event posters would be posted around the Cal Poly campus and San Luis Obispo community a few weeks prior to the event. They would be fairly large at 11”x17” and needed to be striking and easily read upon first glance.

On these, the overhead banner was placed in the same place at the top of each
poster. Then, I needed to add the event date and location. Initially, I wanted to illustrate the information interacting with the buildings in a different way on each poster (Figure 8). Even though the different illustrations provided a sense of variety when the posters were together, the solution with the sky writing was much more successful than the rest. It activated the empty space most effectively, and looked the best as a standalone poster. After realizing that these posters would never be displayed next to one another, I decided to use the skywriting on all four posters. On the revised set of posters, I also added the building name after realizing that many people would not already know where the University Art Gallery was. However, I left the year out since the posters would only be up temporarily so the year would be assumed.

Postcards (Figure 10)

The postcards would be distributed to the participants to give out to family, friends, and acquaintances. These would be read on an individual basis, and the imagery would be reduced to a very small size. I assumed that many of the people viewing these postcards would not have access to the poster series, so I wanted to use the entire spread of the town on each postcard. I decided on a long, skinny panoramic format with the full spread along the bottom. “The Middle of Everywhere” welcome banner would be enlarged and spread across the upper half of the postcard. The illustration was manipulated in Photoshop, and imported into Illustrator where the logistic information was organized on the back. The postcards included more detail than the posters, including a short sentence inviting the viewer to attend the show, as well as our school name and the year. This information was also set in Adobe Caslon to stay consistent with the typeface used in the banner.

Mailers (Figure 11)

The mailers would serve as formal invitations that would be sent to local design
firms, faculty, perhaps alumni, and other notable attendees. Since these would also be seen away from the Cal Poly campus, they would also contain the entire spread. Since these were more formal, the town would also be shown larger than on the postcards. A gateway fold format was chosen; the banner would be displayed on the outside, and would open up in the middle to display the entirety of “The Middle of Everywhere” as well as an invitation and event details. This information was set in Adobe Caslon as well. When closed, the banner side would be taped in the middle, and there would be space for mailing information on the other side.

I felt like the final results were successful and accurate to my original concept for the project. The applications are cohesive and will hopefully be successful in advertising the show to the public in a fun and engaging way.
Chapter IV: Summary and Recommendations

For this project, a series of promotional items was designed in order to advertise an end of year senior graphic design show for the Art and Design department. This would include a set of posters, a panoramic postcard, and a mailer. Each printed item would help advertise the show to a slightly different audience.

The theme chosen for the show was “The Middle of Everywhere,” which shows a positive outlook on Cal Poly’s central location within California. The visual concept for these pieces was to create a colorful fictional town to which each student brings a unique talent or service. The town would consist of a series of storefronts owned by the students, who would also be illustrated taking part in the activities of the town. The submitted items would contain some empty storefronts and generic characters that would serve as placeholders until students register later in the year and a final roster is gathered.

The buildings and characters were drawn with pen and pencil on paper, then scanned and manipulated in Photoshop using a simulated watercolor method. The entire spread was then separated and incorporated in the different print applications. Different type treatments were used for the event logistics on each application; they were hand drawn on the posters, and digitally set on the postcard and mailer.

The final set of promotional items was cohesive yet interesting. The illustrated solution was versatile enough to easily apply to different printed applications, and left room to make changes and additions as necessary.

Unfortunately, the illustrative approach changed my design process and timeline quite a bit. The bulk of my time was spent drawing, leaving less time for designing. Since the illustrations would be a work in progress until registrations would be taken, I planned to continue experimenting with hand drawn type on the postcard and mailer. Other
printed materials should be designed at a later date after more information is gathered, especially a show program with detailed information about the show and each student participant.
Bibliography


University Art Gallery, California Polytechnic State University. http://artgallery.calpoly.edu/
Appendix
Hello Graphic Design Seniors!

For those of you who I haven’t met, my name is Mai-Chi. I am also a senior graphic design concentration planning on graduating in the spring. As part of my senior project, I will be organizing a senior class graphic design show that will take place towards the end of spring quarter. If you are planning on graduating within one quarter of Spring 2010, I would love to have you participate in the show.

Some preliminary details:
• This will be an on-campus event open to the campus and community.
• I will be setting up the logistics, including inviting employers and alumni
• It will be set up like a architecture studio show, lasting 3-5 hours, where each senior will have some table and wall space to display materials as desired.

If this sounds interesting to you, please respond to this email with answers to the following questions. I’d like to get a general idea of how many people would be interested, and what you guys would want out of this event.

1. Would you be interested in participating?
2. Potential locations (thoughts and preferences?):
   • UU 220 – central location on campus, large meeting room with tables, chairs, projectors
   • Art gallery – smaller space, white walls, convenient location for us
   • Second floor of library – open space, often hosts student art exhibitions
3. Potential dates (thoughts and preferences?):
   • Mid-Late April – early in the quarter, less potential conflicts
   • Late May – end of quarter: we’ll have more pieces to show, but we’ll also be more stressed out. Potential scheduling conflicts with department and AIGA SF portfolio reviews.
4. What I will provide for you/the event:
   • all logistics will be taken care of, employers and alumni invited; all you need to do is show up with your stuff!
   • an individual table and wall space
   • your name in all promotional materials
   • approx. 50 postcards to distribute to friends and family
Would you be willing to pay a small registration fee? If so, how much?
5. I’d love to hear any concerns or any additional comments or feedback you might have!

Thanks so much everyone! Can’t wait to hear back from you.

Mai-Chi
Figure 2: Richard Scarry’s *Busy Busy Town*

Figure 3: Spread from Anne Rockwell’s *Gypsy Girl’s Best Shoes*
Figure 4: Houses from Mill St. used for reference/inspiration
Figure 5: Architectural Details

Flowers/Plants

Doors

Roof Types

Windows

M.E.C. Detailing
Figure 6: Full b/w line illustration
Figure 7: Caricatures
Figure 8: Type treatments for logistical information
WELCOME TO THE
MIDDLE of EVERYWHERE
a cal poly senior graphic design exhibition

university art gallery
may 14, 4-7 pm
322 big 34

Figure 9.1: Poster #1
WELCOME TO THE MIDDLE of EVERYWHERE
a cal poly senior graphic design exhibition

university art gallery
May 14, 4-7 PM
Feb 14, 1-5 PM

Figure 9.2: Poster #2
WELCOME TO THE
MIDDLE of EVERYWHERE
a cal poly senior graphic design exhibition

university art gallery
may 14, 4-7 p.m.
bedg. 34

Figure 9.3: Poster #3
Figure 9.4: Poster #4
Figure 10: Postcards

Welcome to the Middle of Everywhere

Please join us in celebrating our first annual senior graphic design exhibition:

The Middle of Everywhere
California Polytechnic State University
University Art Gallery, Bloc 34
May 14, 2010 from 4–7 PM
Figure 11: Mailer

Front

Welcome to the Middle of Everywhere

Back

Mailer

Inside

You are cordially invited to join the Cal Poly Art and Design Department’s graduating class of 2010 at the first annual senior graphic design exhibitions.

The Middle of Everywhere

University Art Gallery

Dexter, Building 24

May 16, 2010, 4-7 PM